***Genesis Journeys***

**Creation, Humans, and Nature: Is pollution the Torah's fault?**

Rabbi Sammy Bergman- [sbergman@torontotorah.com](mailto:sbergman@torontotorah.com)

1. **The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis Lynn White. 1967. Science 155: 1203-1207.**

In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all- powerful G-d had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, G-d had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. **G-d planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in G-d's image…**

But, as we now recognize, somewhat over a century ago science and technology--hitherto quite separate activities--joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control. If so, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt. I personally doubt that disastrous ecologic backlash can be avoided simply by applying to our problems more science and more technology. Our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians. Despite Copernicus, all the cosmos rotates around our little globe. Despite Darwin, we are not, in our hearts, part of the natural process. We are superior to nature, contemptuous of it, willing to use it for our slightest whim. The newly elected Governor of California, like myself a churchman but less troubled than I, spoke for the Christian tradition when he said (as is alleged), "when you've seen one redwood tree, you've seen them all." To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West

# **Bereishit 1:26-30**

**כו** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקים, נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ; וְיִרְדּוּ בִדְגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ, וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ, הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ.  **כז** וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹקים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ, בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ:  זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, בָּרָא אֹתָם.  **כח** וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם, אֱלֹקים, וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹקים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמִלְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ, וְכִבְשֻׁהָ; וּרְדוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָּם, וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם, וּבְכָל-חַיָּה, הָרֹמֶשֶׂת עַל-הָאָרֶץ.  **כט** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקים, הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב זֹרֵעַ זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ, וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְרִי-עֵץ, זֹרֵעַ זָרַע:  לָכֶם יִהְיֶה, לְאָכְלָה.  **ל** וּלְכָל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכֹל רוֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב, לְאָכְלָה; וַיְהִי-כֵן.

And G-d said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” And G-d created man in His image, in the image of G-d He created him; male and female He created them. G-d blessed them and G-d said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.” G-d said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so.

# **Last in Creation**

1. **Rabbi David Kimchi on Bereishit 1:26**

ולמעלת האדם ולכבודו בראו באחרונה להודיע שכל נבראי מטה נבראו בעבורו, ושמוהו אדון על כולם...

Because of Man’s greatness and for his honour, He created him last to show that all of the lower creations are for him, and he appointed him a master over the whole world.

1. **Bereishit Rabbah Parsha 8**

א"ר שמעון בן לקיש אחור למעשה יום האחרון וקדם למעשה יום הראשון... אם זכה אדם אומרים לו אתה קדמת למלאכי השרת ואם לאו אומרים לו זבוב קדמך, יתוש קדמך, שלשול זה קדמך

R’ Shimon Ben Lakish said: “The End of the creations of the last day, and the beginning of the creation of the first day…If a person succeeds we tell him: “You were before the angels, if not we tell him: “Even the fly preceded you, even the mosquito preceded you, even this filth preceded you.

1. **Sanhedrin 38a (William Davidson Edition Translation)**

ת"ר אדם נברא בערב שבת ומפני מה? שלא יהו המינים אומרים שותף היה לו להקדוש ברוך הוא במעשה בראשית דבר אחר שאם תזוח דעתו עליו אומר לו יתוש קדמך במעשה בראשית דבר אחר כדי שיכנס למצוה מיד דבר אחר כדי שיכנס לסעודה מיד משל למלך בשר ודם שבנה פלטרין ושיכללן והתקין סעודה ואחר כך הכניס אורחין

Adam the first man was created on Shabbat eve at the close of the six days of Creation. And for what reason was this so? 1) So that the heretics will not be able to say that the Holy One, Blessed be He, had a partner, i.e., Adam, in the acts of Creation. 2) Alternatively, he was created on Shabbat eve so that if a person becomes haughty, G-d can say to him: The mosquito preceded you in the acts of Creation, as you were created last. 3) Alternatively, he was created on Shabbat eve in order that he enter into the mitzva of observing Shabbat immediately. 4) Alternatively, he was created on Shabbat eve, after all of the other creations, in order that he enter into a feast immediately, as the whole world was prepared for him. This is comparable to a king of flesh and blood, who first built palaces [*palterin*] and improved them, and prepared a feast and afterward brought in his guests.

# **To Rule Over Nature**

1. **Rabbi David Kimchi ibid.**

וירדו בדגת הים - להודיע כי כל נבראי מטה לא נבראו אלא בעבור אדם ושיהיה הוא בשכלו מלך ומושל עליהם, שאם לא כן לא היה בעולם השפל מי שיכיר מי בראו; ואמר וירדו לשון רבים, כי אדם כולל זכר ונקבה כמו שאמר ויברך אותם אלקים ואמר גם כן וירדו כי הממשלה והשררה לאדם בברואים בשני חלקיו בכח השכל לחשוב מחשבות איך ירדה בהם, ובכח הגוף בתכונת ידו שנעשו בתכונת נפלאות לעשות בהם כל מלאכת מחשבת מה שאין כן בשאר נבראים

To declare that all the creatures below were created only for man and that he would be with his mind, a king and ruler over them, that otherwise there was no one in the lower world who would know who they created; And it said “And they shall rule” in plural, that man includes male and female as He said and G-d blessed them and it also said and they shall rule for authority of man over the creations involves his two parts, by the power of the mind to contemplate how to rule over them, and by the power of the body, with his hand which can create wonders to create thoughtful labour which other creations are incapable of.

1. **Bereishit Rabbah Parsha 8**

ורדו בדגת הים, אמר רבי חנינא אם זכה רדו ואם לאו ירדו, אמר רבי יעקב דכפר חנין את שהוא בצלמנו כדמותנו ורדו, את שאינו בצלמנו כדמותנו ירדו

And they shall rule over the fish of the sea, Rabbi Chanina said if he succeeds “Rule”, if not “they will fall”, Rabbi Yaakov of the town of Chanin said “Those who are “in our shadow and our image will rule, those who aren’t will fall”.

1. **Talmud, Sanhedrin 59b**

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: אדם הראשון לא הותר לו בשר לאכילה, דכתיב לכם יהיה לאכלה ולכל חית הארץ - ולא חית הארץ לכם. וכשבאו בני נח התיר להם, שנאמר כירק עשב נתתי לכם את כל…מיתיבי: ורדו בדגת הים מאי לאו לאכילה? - לא, למלאכה

Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Rav, Adam the first wasn’t permitted to eat meat, as it writes “for you it will be to eat, and for the wild animals”, but not the wild animals for you. When the children of Noach came He allowed them as it states: “like the vegetation and grass, I have given you all”…They asked: “And you shall rule the fish of the sea”, doesn’t this allow eating? No, for work

1. **Rabbi Shimson Raphael Hirsch, Bereishit 1:26**

אך תפקידו של אדם לרדות "בם" - לא "אותם"; עליו להפעיל את שלטונו בכל בעלי החיים, בהם ובארץ עצמה; בבואו לקיים את תפקידו כאדם ישלול מהם מקצת מחירותם ויביאם לידו חלקית. אם ישלוט ביצורים כ"אדם" - בצלם אלקים ובדמותו - ברצון יקבלו את עול שלטונו; שלטונו איננו שעבוד והשפלה, אלא עילוי להם ושיתופם בחירות האלקית. העולם כולו ייכנע ברצון לאדם הטהור העובד את בוראו. אך אם ינצל האדם את מעמדו לרעה, ולא ישלוט ביצורים כ"אדם" - כנציג ובא כח לאל -, אלא בכחו ובעוצם ידו, לא ברצון ייכנעו לו בעלי החיים. וכך הורו חכמינו: "את שהוא בצלמנו כדמותנו וירדו, את שאינו בצלמנו כדמותנו וירדו; זכו וירדו, לא זכו וירדו" (בראשית רבה ח, יב). ואכן, לא הרי "רדה" כהרי "כבש". "רדה" מציין רק את יחס השליט לעמו, שאף הוא איננו אלא יחס שעל תנאי. שונה הימנו "כבש"

Man has this position towards all living beings on earth. It is not his destiny to make all of them completely submissive. The earth and its creatures may still have relationships that are withdrawn from us, in which they are ends in themselves. Only he has the determination: לרדות בם not אותם, to exercise his dominion among all living beings, over them and the earth itself, to bring them partially into his hand for the fulfillment of his human task from their free independence. If man steps up to the earth world as man in the image, and shadow of G-d and only demands their services in the service of G-d: the earth world gladly recognizes him as its ruler, his rule itself is not servitude and humiliation, rather an exaltation and exaltation of all earthly beings in the circle of free moral, divine purposes. The whole world willingly bows to the pure, G-d-serving man. But if a person abuses his position, he does not appear as אדם, as a governor of G-d, but in his own glory of power over the world, then the animal does not willingly bow his neck.

**Humanity: Separate from Nature?**

1. **Rabbi David Kimchi ibid.**

וקרא אותו אדם …ואדם הוא לקוח מהאדמה, ואם כן למה נקרא שמו אדם כי גם החיים האחרים הם מאדמה? אלא רצה להבדילו בשמו משאר בעלי החיים, כמו שהוא מובדל מהם ברוח ובגוף, כי החיים האחרים ידועים כי הם מאדמה רוחם וגופם ואין צריך ליחסם לאדמה אבל אדם שרוחו מן השמים קרא אותו אדם להבדילו מחיים העליונים…וכשברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את האדם מהעליונים והתחתונים קראו אדם. כלומר אף על פי שרוחו מן השמים אדם הוא כי גופו נוצר מן האדמה כמו שאמר עפר מן האדמה, ומושבו באדמה ושם חיותו ותרבותו

And He called him “Adam”… Adam is taken from “Adamah” [earth], and if so why is his name called Adam because the other life is also from earth? **But He wanted to distinguish him by name from other animals**, as he differs from them in spirit and body, because the other life is known to be from the earth both their spirit and body and do not need to be attributed to earth. But Man, whose spirit is from heaven was called “Adam” to distinguish him from the upper life …and when the Blessed One created man from the upper realm and lower realm called him man. That is, even though his spirit is from heaven he is Adam in that that his body was created from the earth as it is said dust from the earth, and his seat in the earth and there his life and culture.

1. **Don Isaac Abravanel Bereishit Chapter 1**

ולכן כדי לזרזו בראו ביום א' עם שאר הב"ח יושבים אצלם ורוחם בפחיתות וכליונם ושלא יחשוב גרועים הם ממנו בטבעיהם כי כמות זה כן מות זה ורוח אחד חיוני להם ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין בענין הגוף כי הכל הבל אבל ההבדל ביניהם מצד השכל השכלים אשר בו ולכן יתחזק להתרחק מדרכיהם החמריים ולהדבק בשכלו כי בזה יקנה שם ואחרית לנפשו ואם לא יעשה כן יהיה סופו כבהמה וכחיה כמו שהיתה התחלת כלם יחד ביום א'

Therefore, in order to warn him, He created him one day with the rest of the beasts sitting with them and their spirit in inferiority and extinction and so he should not think they are worse than him in their nature because they will both die and share one living spirit. **And man’s advantage over the beast isn’t in his body for all is fleeting. Rather the distinction between them lies in his intellect**. Therefore he will be strengthened to move away from their material ways and cling to his mind because through this he will acquire a name and an end for his soul and if he does not do so his end will be like a beast and an animal as they all began together in one day.

**A Second Tale of Creation**

1. **Bereishit 2:4-17**

אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, בְּ**הִ**בָּרְאָם:  בְּיוֹם, עֲשׂוֹת ה’ אֱלֹקִים--אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמָיִם.  **ה** וְכֹל שִׂיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה, טֶרֶם יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ, וְכָל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה, טֶרֶם יִצְמָח:  כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה’ אֱלֹקִים, עַל-הָאָרֶץ, וְאָדָם אַיִן, לַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה.  **ו** וְאֵד, יַעֲלֶה מִן-הָאָרֶץ, וְהִשְׁקָה, אֶת-כָּל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה.  **ז** וַיִּיצֶר ה’ אֱלֹקִים אֶת-הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו, נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.  **ח** וַיִּטַּע ה’ אֱלֹקִים, גַּן-בְּעֵדֶן--מִקֶּדֶם; וַיָּשֶׂם שָׁם, אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר.  **ט** וַיַּצְמַח ה’ אֱלֹקִים, מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, כָּל-עֵץ נֶחְמָד לְמַרְאֶה, וְטוֹב לְמַאֲכָל--וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים, בְּתוֹךְ הַגָּן, וְעֵץ, הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע. ...  **טו** וַיִּקַּח ה’ אֱלֹקִים, אֶת-הָאָדָם; וַיַּנִּחֵהוּ בְגַן-עֵדֶן, לְעָבְדָהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ.  **טז** וַיְצַו ה’ אֱלֹקִים, עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכֹּל עֵץ-הַגָּן, אָכֹל תֹּאכֵל.  **יז** וּמֵעֵץ, הַדַּעַת טוֹב וָרָע--לֹא תֹאכַל, מִמֶּנּוּ:  כִּי, בְּיוֹם אֲכָלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ--מוֹת תָּמוּת.

Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When the LORD G-d made earth and heaven— when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD G-d had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth— the LORD G-d formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. The LORD G-d planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. And from the ground the LORD G-d caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad. A river issues from Eden to water the garden, and it then divides and becomes four branches…The LORD G-d took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. And the LORD G-d commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.”

1. **Rabbi Joseph B. Soleveichik, “Confrontation” from Tradition 1964, Volume 6**

*“And every plant of the field was not yet in the earth and every herb of the field had not yet grown, . . . and there was no man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord G-d formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:5-7)*

Man who was created out of the dust of the ground, enveloped in a mist rising from the jungle, determined by biological immediacy and mechanical necessity, knows of no responsibility, no opposition, no fear, and no dichotomy, and hence he is free from carrying the load of humanity.

In a word, this man is a non-confronted being. He is neither conscious of his assignment vis-a-vis something which is outside of himself nor is he aware of his existential otherness as a being summoned by his Maker to rise to tragic greatness…

*And the Lord G-d planted a garden eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord G-d caused to grow every tree that is desirable to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:8-9)*

Man depicted in these verses is hedonically-minded and pleasure-seeking, having at his disposal a multitude of possibilities of sense-gratification. Before him stretches a vast garden with an almost endless variety of trees desirable and good, tempting, fascinating, and exciting the boundless fantasy with their glamorous colors….

*"And the Lord G-d took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it."*

This sentence in Genesis 2:15 is almost a verbatim repetition of Genesis 2:8, yet the accounts differ in two respects. First, in the second account, the Bible uses a verb denoting action preceding the placing of man in the Garden of Eden - "And G-d *took*  the man and placed him" - whereas in the previous account, the verb "he placed", is not accompanied by any preliminary action on the part of the Almighty. The expression “And He took” does not occur in the first account. Second, there is no mention in the previous account of any assignment given to man while this account does specify that man was charged with the task of cultivating and keeping the garden.

The reason for these variations lies in the fact that the two accounts are related to two different men. The first story, as we have previously indicated, is of non-confronted man carried by the mighty tide of a uniform, simple, non-reflective life, who was placed in the Garden of Eden for one purpose only - to pursue pleasure, to enjoy the fruit of the trees without toil, to live in ignorance of his human destiny, to encounter no problem and to be concerned with no obligation. As we stated previously, non-confronted man is a non-normative being. The second story is of confronted man who began to appraise critically his position vis-à-vis his environment and found his existential experience too complex to be equated with the simplicity and non-directedness of the natural life-stream. This man, as a subject-knower facing an almost impenetrable objective order, was dislocated by G-d from his position of naturalness and harmonious being and placed in a new existential realm, that of confronted existence. Confronted man is a displaced person. Having been taken out of a state of complacency and optimistic naiveté, he finds the intimate relationship between him and the order of facticity ending in tension and conflict. The verb “And he took” signifies that G-d removed man from one dimension and thrust him into another - that of confronted existence. At this phase, man, estranged from nature, fully aware of his grand and tragic destiny, became the recipient of the first norm . "And the Lord G-d commanded the man." The divine imperative burst forth out of infinity and overpowered finite man.

**Was Everything Created For Mankind?**

1. **Rambam, Introduction to the Mishna**

כל הנמצאים מתחת גלגל הירחאמנם הומצאו בשביל האדם בלבד

All that exists under the sphere of the moon, was only brought into existence for manking

1. **Rambam, Guide for the Perplexed 3:13**

I consider therefore the following opinion as most correct according to the teaching of the Bible, and best in accordance with the results of philosophy; namely, that the Universe does not exist for man's sake, but that each being exists for its own sake, and not because of some other thing. Thus we believe in the Creation, and yet need not inquire what purpose is served by each species of the existing things, because we assume that G-d created all parts of the Universe by His will; some for their own sake, and some for the sake of other beings, that include their own purpose in themselves. In the same manner as it was the will of G-d that man should exist, so it was His will that the heavens with their stars should exist, that there should be angels, and each of these beings is itself the purpose of its own existence.

1. **Rabbi David Tzvi Hoffman, Introduction to Bereishit**

ועוד מדגישה התורה, כי כל אשר ברא אלקים – טוב הוא, כלומר שיש בו כל הדרוש לקיום עצמי, עתה ובעתיד; ולאחר שנברא האדם, רואה אלקים כי טוב מאד הוא, כלומר לא רק מוכשר לקיים את עצמו כי אם גם ראוי לקדם את יעודו ואת תכליתו שלו, של האדם. מכאן נמצינו למדים, כי כל הברואים – תכלית כפולה להם, תכלית עצמית מחד, ומאידך – לשמש את האדם.

And the Torah further emphasizes that everything that G-d has created is good, that is, that it has everything necessary for self-existence, now and in the future; And after man was created, G-d sees that he is very good, that is, not only capable of sustaining himself but also worthy of advancing his destiny and the purpose, of man. From this we learn that all creatures have a dual purpose, a self-purpose on the one hand, and on the other - to serve man.

1. **Kohelet Rabbah 7:13**

בשעה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את אדם הראשון, נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו: ראה מעשיי, כמה נאים ומשובחין הן, וכל מה שבראתי, בשבילך בראתי. תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי, שאם קלקלת, אין מי שיתקן אחריך.

When the Blessed One created the first man, He took him lead him near all the trees of Gan Eden and said to him: See my deeds, how beautiful and fine they are, and all that **I have created, for you I have created.** **Make sure you do not spoil and destroy My world, that if you spoil, there is no one to fix after you.**